

Recreational Trails Program

FY 2013

Grant Application Guidelines

Important Highlights

- **All applications and application materials will be accepted through the new online grant management system at fundingmt.org. The funding opportunity won't be open and available online until June 15.**
- **New Application Deadline: August 1, 2012**
- **Grant Writing and Reimbursement Trainings are Available and Recommended (June 15 or June 16 from 9:00-12:30 p.m. in FWP Commission Rooms in Helena)**
- **Cost-Share Program: 80% Recreational Trails Program Funds; 20% Sponsor Funds**
- **No longer require Wildlife and Fisheries Review Forms or Weed Plans**
- **Environmental Review Documents and Support Letters are valid for up to three years if you have no variations (no changes in your project scope) from previous grant applications**
- **\$1,320,000 (anticipated amount) Available for Grants for Recreational Trails**

If you have questions or concerns regarding any aspect of your application, please don't hesitate to call Beth Shumate (444-4585) of the Recreational Trails Program for advice.

The Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA21) established the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which provides for the transfer of federal gas taxes paid on non-highway recreational fuel used in off-highway vehicles to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Montana State Parks (MSP) administers the RTP funds at the state level, while the FHWA provides program oversight at the federal level. RTP funding is currently made available through the federal program titled, "Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users." The acronym for this program is SAFETEA-LU.

RTP grant applicants (sponsors) can include federal, state, county or municipal agencies, private associations and clubs. RTP grants to sponsors may not exceed 80% of the total of an individual project. This is a reimbursement program. After approval of all required documentation, FWP will reimburse the sponsor for 80% of the actual documented costs incurred. Reimbursement

of RTP funds will only be approved for project expenditures incurred after the date of the signed project agreement between the project sponsor and MSP.

Compliance with Existing Laws, Management Authority Regulations, Policies and Ordinances

All projects seeking funding from the RTP Program must comply with existing federal, state and jurisdictional laws, regulations and ordinances. All projects, with the exception of brochures, portable exhibits and displays must satisfy the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Sponsors should pay special attention to the public comment requirements. Please note that grant applicants are no longer required to post a legal notice for a 30-day public comment period to apply for an RTP grant. Public involvement required by the Montana Environmental Policy Act will be satisfied by Montana State Parks. MSP will initiate a programmatic public involvement process after all grant applications are reviewed and tentatively approved.

MSP still encourages public involvement in all of its grant-funded trail projects. The general public, adjacent landowners, and other interested parties should be involved from the onset. Promotion of public participation may be through newspaper articles and any other means available, such as public meetings, federal quarterly newsletters, TV programs, radio announcements, etc.

NEPA & MEPA Requirements: Although NEPA and MEPA are virtually identical in their mandates, the implementation of each Act is a separate and distinct federal and state function. Federal and state agencies are required to coordinate with each other and each may TIER to or adopt by reference the other's environmental review. The federal and state agencies also may cooperate in the preparation of a single environmental review that is legally sufficient for both NEPA and MEPA. Documentation of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other Federal environmental laws, regulations, and Executive Orders must be provided as part of an authorized project under the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). Please refer to the *Environmental Tiering Form* in the "Forms" section of the webpage if you intend to "tier" off a NEPA document.

Note: Dated MEPA NEPA Checklists or other environmental forms are good for three years. If the proposed project is exactly the same as submitted in previous applications (no variations), the MEPA/NEPA Checklist and associated documents may be used with this application.

Application Limitations

An applicant may submit only one grant application per grant cycle. An application may contain more than one project phase. If the application contains more than one distinct project phase, the applicant must prioritize those phases.

Any applicant with an RTP grant approved prior to 2010 that has not yet completed that project is not eligible to apply for an FY 2013 grant.

Planning, Design, and Feasibility Studies

Federal Highway Administration Guidance will only allow a “small” portion (less than 20%) of a grant to be used for planning, design or feasibility studies associated with a recreational trail project. According to Recreational Trails Program Guidance, Section 206(h)(1)(C) allows preapproval project planning and environmental compliance costs to be credited toward the non-Federal share of the cost of a project, limited to costs incurred less than 18 months prior to project approval. The costs incurred must be costs that would be allowable if the project had been approved. This provision helps project sponsors cover significant up-front costs incurred prior to project approval. The 18 month limit is intended to assure that planning and environmental documentation are still valid. The limit also encourages timely project approval.

If your project includes construction or improvements along any State Highway Right of Ways (RoW), the project sponsor must contact their local Montana Department of Transportation office and follow all RoW requirements. FHWA Office of Real Estate Services published [*Real Estate Acquisition Guide for Local Public Agencies*](#). This will be helpful for any local public agency acquiring land using Federal-aid highway program funds (including CTEP or RTP funds). See Realty related documents at www.fhwa.dot.gov/realestate/index.htm.

Legal Easements

If the proposed project is not entirely on public land and crosses private property, the applicant must include an owner-signed legal easement or lease agreement that will be valid for a minimum of 25 years. RTP grant recipients are required to follow the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970. Implementation regulations are found in 49 CFR Part 24 (see link below).

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/fapg/cfr4924a.htm>

Application Guidelines for Indirect Costs

Please refer to the Indirect and Direct Costs Guidelines document under the Information Section to determine eligible costs for your project.

<http://fwp.mt.gov/recreation/grants/rtp/default.html>

Application Guidelines for Snowmobile and Ski Clubs

Fish, Wildlife & Parks implemented a snowmobile trail groomer reimbursement methodology that employs an hourly rate based on expenditures for fuel, oil, maintenance, repairs, etc. MSP will reimburse snowmobile and cross-country ski clubs for all expenditures associated with grooming operations through the hourly rate.

- Costs included: repairs, maintenance (including maintenance labor), costs associated with transportation of groomers, fuel, oil.
- Costs not included: labor to operate machine and any other costs not associated with actual operation of the equipment.

Labor and other costs (i.e. signs, weed spray) not directly associated with operation of a snowmobile trail groomer are reimbursed under previously approved methods.

Hourly Rates

Utility Sled Used for Trail Grooming: \$20.00 per hour (does not include grooming labor)

All Other Large Groomers: \$60.00 per hour (does not include grooming labor)

Beginning in FY 2010, MSP reimburses RTP grant sponsors for trail groomer expenses at \$20 or \$60 per hour of trail groomed, according to the groomer's hour meter or record of hours. These rates are used in lieu of receipts for fuel, oil, maintenance, repairs, etc. Labor and other eligible costs not directly associated with operation of the snowmobile trail groomer are reimbursed under standard and previously approved methods.

It is very important that each club documents hours and miles groomed using Snowmobile Program record sheets or similar reporting forms (daily grooming logs and monthly summary sheets).

Fiscal Year 2013 Recreational Trails Program grant applicants will need to comply with these reimbursement requirements in order to receive grant funds for grooming operations. All clubs need to submit project cost tables based on the above explanation.

Grant Categories

MSP offers the following RTP grant categories.

- The **Small Grant** category comprises sponsors requesting \$20,000 or less per grant application. This category assists grant applicants with fewer grant-writing resources or smaller projects.
- The **Standard Grant** category includes sponsors requesting \$20,001-\$45,000.
- In the spirit of helping one or more RTP grant applicants move closer to the goal of completing a trails project, MSP also offers **Big Grants** of \$90,000 each RTP grant round.
- For trails large enough to have regional significance in Montana, such as rail-trail projects, MSP offers the **Special Set-Aside Grant**. **Due to the uncertainty concerning funding, we are not able to offer a Set-Aside Grant for FY 2013.** There is no specific grant ceiling on the amount of money that may be requested, but a prospective applicant must contact MSP to provide a brief overview of its project as soon as practical. MSP can provide input as to whether a proposed project has merit before the time-consuming process of grant writing is initiated.

Sponsors must provide all information requested and submit the application by the August 1, 2012 application deadline. **Late or incomplete applications will not be considered for funding.**

Deadline: Your RTP Application Must Be Submitted by Noon on August 1, 2012!